

VZCZCXRO5733  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW  
DE RUEHBUL #0423/01 0590941  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 280941Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7516  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000423

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/PPD, ECA/A/L

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANS SEE ENGLISH TRAINING AS ROAD TO FUTURE

¶1. Summary: "English + Youth = Jobs + Hope," Afghanistan's former Minister of Education, Mohammad Atmar, concisely formulated. With an unemployment rate hovering around 40%, Afghans view English language training as an opportunity for better jobs and pay; PA views it as an opportunity to offer alternative world visions and options to those who might otherwise have none. Information, progressive ideas, an educated middle class, economic development and positive engagement with the West are all dependent upon access to English language programs. End Summary.

¶2. What works? The English Access Microscholarship Program is the basis of Post efforts as it offers non-elite students the opportunity to gain tangible job skills in a cost effective manner. In the short time that this program has run at two sites in Kabul, it has supported English language classes for 1,600 students. In 2009, this program will expand to include an additional two sites in Kabul, as well as sites in Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Bamyan, Khost, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. Total investment of just over half a million dollars has resulted in two years of English language instruction for more than 2,700 students.

¶3. Evidence of the Access program's success in Kabul arrived in November when an implementing partner sent us a list of about 50 students who have found lucrative jobs in Kabul province working in national and international organizations. These former students all came from low-income or refugee-returnee families. We have heard similar stories from the director of the orphanages where we run our Access program - a boy who got a job working for the Germans, a woman who got a scholarship to the King's Academy in Jordan - all because they speak English.

¶4. Efforts to teach English in Afghanistan are in their infancy. A major impediment to spreading these skills is a lack of qualified teachers. To address this, PA organized three one-week visits by the Senior English Language Fellow (ELF) in New Delhi over the course of the past year. His highly popular teacher training courses have benefited English teachers who will train professors at Education Training Faculties in different provinces around the country. We also have targeted English departments at Kabul University, Kabul Education University, and ELTAA (English Language Teacher's Association of Afghanistan) coordinators and members. Repeat visits by the same Senior ELF increased the effectiveness of the program since he was already familiar with the situation in Kabul and could progressively build upon concepts previously covered.

¶5. In order to support provincial teacher training, post supported six-week workshops in early 2009 in Herat, Ghor and Bamyan provinces, which were conducted by an Indian-based organization. For \$56,000, these three workshops reached 360 English teachers in the regions. Such initiatives should not just be continued, but expanded to reach even more provinces.

¶6. Post also supported the creation of the English Language Teacher's Association of Afghanistan in 2007. In two years, ELTAA has held two annual conferences, numerous workshops, and training sessions through its six regional branches and two Kabul branches. The organization also serves as a job-placement resource, as several universities have sought ELTAA members for various positions. ELTAA

members will coordinate Access programs in Khost, Kandahar, and Jalalabad - cities where security concerns make it difficult for the Embassy to conduct programs.

¶7. The programs we're sponsoring are successful - Access, training, supporting ELTAA - but could accomplish more with sufficient funding to expand to a larger scope. Demand for additional Access programs is great - we have several outstanding proposals, including one for a special girl's program in Kandahar. Teacher training efforts are focused on Kabul Education University and Kabul University, but we should expand to work with other institutes, both in Kabul and throughout the country.

¶8. With additional funding, PA could expand our extremely successful English language programs to reach a younger and wider audience, while enhancing educational opportunities all the way up the chain, since Kabul University is planning to convert its language of instruction to English in 2012. This would allow Post to fulfill the endless desire for English language training. With greater support we can increase the number of people impacted by our programs and eligible up through the training continuum for programs such as YES and Fulbright. While Access funds can be used for immersion camps, we decided to use this year's funding to support two year programs because they are much more cost effective; Access funding would not have allowed us to do both. Past English immersion camps have been successful in identifying students from under-served areas who have potential to become strong leaders. Fifteen of this year's YES students participated in this immersion camp. Additionally, building in pedagogical workshops for teachers strengthens English instruction capabilities. But they come at a significant price - the immersion camp in early 2008 came with a price tag of approximately \$1 million.

KABUL 00000423 002 OF 002

¶9. We also feel that we could play a significant role in building up English teaching programs at one Kabul-based university and seven provincial universities. We would like to employ available Western contractors and USG alumni to conduct intensive teacher and student training, leaving each university with a world-class English teaching department. Each university would also receive internet hook ups and computers to enable the staff and students to quickly reap the benefits of their English training. At many universities, senior students start as English teachers immediately after graduation, having little or no training in pedagogy. These young teachers lack resources, and native-speakers (or near-native, in the case of YES alumni) would offer considerable support.

¶10. Afghanistan's highly successful Lincoln Center program also emphasizes English language training. Unfortunately, due to budgetary constraints, each Lincoln Center is staffed only by volunteer teachers. The Embassy uses incentives such as training, free materials, and small honoraria to reward these teachers who regularly donate hours of time each week. Each of Afghanistan's Lincoln Centers (currently five, with three new centers scheduled to open by June) currently hosts free English classes daily, which served more than 5,000 students in 2008. Most of these programs target intermediate and advanced speakers. A small amount of additional funding for increased honoraria could significantly increase the effectiveness of our programs. English language classes are the number one request of Lincoln Center visitors - and have been a clear success as visitors improve their English, are introduced to American citizens and culture, and enhance their chances for international scholarships and local education.

¶12. Afghanistan's madrassas offer another area rich with potential for expanding English teaching. The Ministry of Education (MOE) runs English classes at 12 higher education madrassas (Darul Ulooms) and plans to implement English classes at the remaining thirty. The MOE is currently unable to support English teaching in the remaining 469 (out of 511) madrassas and other religious schools in Afghanistan, leaving plenty of opportunities for expanding our English Access program. According to the Minister of Education's Chief of Staff, "We should invest in such a program in order to ensure stability in Afghanistan."

¶13. Lack of Public Affairs staffing is a significant impediment to our implementing the most effective English language program possible in Afghanistan. Currently, the CAO oversees the FSN English language coordinator as one of many responsibilities. Because of the workload, the CAO's secretary position was recently converted to an English Language Office administrative assistant position. Specialist expertise is still needed, for which post has recently submitted a request for a Senior English Language Fellow to coordinate teacher training both in Kabul and regionally. Post also strongly supports the request for a Regional English Language Officer to be shared with Pakistan.

¶14. Conclusion: Afghans are lining up to "buy" American language and culture - will we offer enough to meet the demand? Can we afford not to?

Dell